DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 083 205 SP 007 401

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TITLE Influentials Upon Student Teachers in Three Pre-Service Settings.
PUB DATE [71]
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Change; *Changing Attitudes; *Community Influence; Educational Environment; *Parent Influence; Preservice Education; Student Attitudes; *Student Teachers; *Teacher Influence; Urban Education

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine if the influence of key individuals on student teachers differed by preservice teaching settings and if such persons could affect differences in the perceived beliefs and behaviors of student teachers towards their pupils and towards teaching. Sixty student teachers were divided into three groups of 20 students each. Two groups, "urban" for urban elementary schools and "suburban" for suburban, used traditional teacher preparation programs. The third group, the "project" group, participated in an experimental program for students doing their preservice teaching in inner-city classrooms. The instrument used in the study was a student survey using a 10-point scale to rate the influence, positive or negative, of eight groups of people: parents, teachers, professors, peers, cooperating teachers, college supervisors, principals, and pupils' parents or other members of the community. Results indicated significant positive differences for "project" students. The results of the study support the idea that a student teacher's attitudes can be significantly influenced by the persons they encounter during the student teaching period. (JA)

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ED 083205

INFLUENTIALS UPON STUDENT TEACHERS IN THREE PRE-SERVICE SETTINGS

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A number of persons, both lay and professional, argue that good teachers are "born not made". This argument at its most simplistic level denies there are many influences outside of an individual which affect a teacher's development. A different school of thought argues there are many influences, including certain key persons, who may affect the development of a teacher. Some of these influentials, such as a cooperating teacher and a college supervisor, may present themselves for the first time during the student teaching period; others, such as parents and peers, may overlap with it.

If the notion is accepted that persons and events can and should affect the development of a teacher during preservice teaching, it may be further argued that the more the experiences of the preservice teaching period differ from the usual experiences of the student, the more they will be influential in shaping her development as a teacher. An example is the white, middle-class undergraduate who is placed in an inner-city classroom for his preservice teaching assignment. The student is taken out of his familiar environment and is confronted with a myriad of unfamiliar values and life styles. Unlike his counterpart who is assigned to a suburban classroom, the urban student teacher not only has to

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assume a new role, that of a teacher in a classroom, but also to adapt to an unfamiliar milieu. He is forced to put not only himself into question, but also the new persons he meets and the new values, ideas, and experiences he encounters. An assault on his familiar values and life style comes precisely at the time when he needs to define a teaching role for himself. He has to adapt to new, sometimes completely foreign stimuli.

A Study of the Influentials Upon Student Teachers

A study was undertaken to investigate the influence of key individuals on student teachers in three preservice settings. The purposes of the study were to determine if the influence of key individuals on student teachers differed by preservice teaching settings and if the influences of key persons could affect differences in the perceived beliefs and behaviors of student teachers towards their pupils and towards teaching.

Sample

Sixty student teachers were divied into three groups of twenty students each. Two groups of student teachers, urban and suburban, participated in non-experimental programs similar to those used by many teacher-preparation institutions. Suburban student teachers did their preservice teaching in suburban elementary school classrooms; urban students taught in inner-city elementary ~~in inner-city elementary~~ classrooms. The third group of students, project students, participated in an experimental program for students doing their preservice teaching in inner-city classrooms.

Project students participated in a full semester program which involved students in both the urban community and the urban classroom throughout the semester. The underlying premise of the program was that a teacher must have a prior understanding of the inner-city child and his community in order to teach him effectively in the classroom.

The first half of the project students' semester emphasized student participation in the urban community; the second half of the semester emphasized classroom teaching. The community involvement included "interning" in various community action agencies, seminars with community representatives, field trips, and informal meetings with parents. A full-time community representative worked with the college supervisor in both the community and the classrooms.[1]

All undergraduates used in the study were either juniors or seniors in a semester program of clinical student teaching. Students were assigned to an experienced cooperating teacher and to a college supervisor who visited the classrooms an average of once a week. All students had previous classroom exposure in an "observation and methods" course.

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[1]A more complete description of this type program can be found in "Educating Teachers for the City", by A. J. Pappanikou and T. L. Drake in the Journal of Research and Development in Education, Vol. 4, No. 4, Summer, 1971.

Method and Design

The instrument used in the study was the "Influentials Upon Teaching Beliefs and Behavior" survey developed by Thelbert L. Drake. Student teachers used a 10-point scale to rate the influence, positive or negative, of eight groups of people: parents, teachers, professors, peers, cooperating teacher, college supervisor, principal, and pupils' parents and other members of the community. These persons were rated according to the amount of influence, positive or negative, they were perceived to have exerted upon the student teacher's opinions about pupils and teaching. The specific items on which the eight persons were rated were as follows:

1. My beliefs about the relative abilities of children have been influenced by the following persons to the degrees indicated:
2. My behavior toward disciplining children has been affected by the following persons to the degress indicated:
3. My beliefs about how children learn best has been influenced by the following persons to the degrees indicated:
4. My teaching style (methods) has been affected by the following persons to the degrees indicated:
5. My ideas about how best to evaluate children's performance has been influenced by the following persons to the degrees indicated.

Prior to preservice teaching, students in each of the three comparison groups completed the "Influentials Upon Teaching Beliefs and Behavior"survey. These surveys were used as the pre-test measure. Students complted an identical survey at the conclusion of their preservice teaching as the post-test measure. The instruments were administered by a graduate assistant and analyzed by the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Connecticut.

Thirteen dependent variables were used: the ratings of all key persons combined for each of the five categories (abilities, discipline, learning, teaching methods, and evaluation) and the ratings of each of the eight key persons separately across the five categories. A series of t-Tests were performed to measure pre-test versus post-test differences within each of the three comparison groups.

Results

Results for all key persons combined in the five categories of pupils' abilities, discipline, learning, and teaching methods and evaluation are given in Table 1. Significant positive differences were found for project students in each of the five areas. The combined influences of all identified key persons altered the project students' perceptions at the end of the preservice teaching program as compared to the beginning. These differences were even more important when they were compared to the two significant differences found for urban student teachers. Differences for urban student teachers showed that without the support of the

TABLE 1

Results for the Five Areas Influenced by All Key Persons Combined

Variable	Category	Test	Student Teaching Situation								
			Suburban			Urban			Project		
			Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t
1	Abilities	Pre	23.0	7.1	.57	25.4	7.8	1.33	19.6	7.7	2.67*
		Post	24.4	8.3		21.9	8.8		25.3	5.5	
2	Discipline	Pre	15.9	11.6	.44	23.3	7.9	2.08*	14.6	8.1	2.55*
		Post	17.4	9.3		17.5	9.9		21.2	8.1	
3	Learning	Pre	19.7	8.3	1.05	25.0	6.8	2.28*	16.2	6.8	3.11**
		Post	22.3	7.8		19.5	8.2		22.9	5.6	
4	Teaching Methods	Pre	19.5	8.7	.49	22.4	7.9	1.71	15.1	7.8	3.20**
		Post	20.6	5.0		18.1	7.9		22.0	5.6	
5	Evaluation	Pre	15.8	10.6	2.21*	22.1	7.1	1.36	15.2	7.2	3.65**
		Post	21.8	5.9		19.2	6.4		22.5	5.4	

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

experimental project program there was a decline in the ratings for discipline and learning after the preservice teaching period. For the suburban group there was only one significant change in a positive direction in the area of pupil evaluation.

Results for the influence of the eight key persons across categories is given in Table 2. Three positive, significant differences for project students are found for the supervisor, the principal, and the pupils' parents and the community. The positive influence of the community is especially important when compared to the significant change toward a negative effect of the community on the urban student teachers. Suburban student teachers were influenced positively by the school principal.

The differences noted between the urban student teachers and the project student teachers are conservative in that the mean scores for urban students were significantly more positive for the urban student teachers at the time of the pre-test on analyses one through five, seven, twelve and thirteen.

Discussion

The results of the study support the idea that a student teacher's attitudes can be significantly influenced by the persons they encounter during the student teaching period. Both positive and negative influences were detected. Differences were found for individual persons across the five measured categories and for these categories combining all persons.

TABLE 2

Results for Key Persons Influencing the Five Areas Combined

Variable	Person	Test	Student Teaching Situation								
			Suburban			Urban			Project		
			Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t
6	Parents	Pre	11.2	6.0	.87	12.6	7.5	.55	11.8	9.6	.09
		Post	8.9	10.1		11.5	4.8		12.1	8.1	
7	Teachers	Pre	7.6	10.8	.32	15.5	7.7	1.70	2.8	14.9	1.24
		Post	6.6	8.6		11.4	7.4		7.8	10.5	
8	Professors	Pre	17.9	6.2	1.49	17.5	6.3	1.10	15.2	9.5	.11
		Post	20.1	1.6		15.3	6.3		15.5	7.1	
9	Peers	Pre	15.8	6.9	.60	15.5	5.0	1.61	15.1	8.1	.18
		Post	14.7	4.9		12.5	6.8		14.7	7.5	
10	Cooperating Teacher	Pre	12.8	11.5	1.71	18.3	6.6	.08	12.9	11.9	1.49
		Post	18.6	10.1		18.6	11.1		17.5	6.9	
11	Supervisor	Pre	14.1	6.6	1.56	15.5	6.5	.54	13.3	7.1	3.85**
		Post	16.9	4.3		14.3	7.6		20.7	4.9	
12	Principal	Pre	6.7	9.0	2.88**	11.9	6.3	1.42	4.2	11.5	3.23**
		Post	13.6	5.6		8.3	9.6		13.9	6.9	
13	Pupils' Parents/ Community	Pre	7.9	7.2	.31	11.4	4.7	3.11**	5.6	7.7	2.95**
		Post	7.3	4.8		4.3	9.0		11.8	5.4	

** $p < .01$

As was anticipated, the greatest differences were found between the two groups of student teachers in the inner-city, the urban group and the project group. Project student teachers were influenced in a positive manner on all five categories. The influence of parents and the community was felt to be a positive one.

The fact that project student teachers felt that their contact persons and experiences influenced them positively is especially important when this is compared to the negative influences felt by urban student teachers in a more traditional program. Urban student teachers without specific community training were negatively influenced by key persons in relation to the areas of discipline and learning. The urban student teachers also rated the influence of parents and the community as negative.

Suburban student teachers, in a more familiar setting than either the urban or the project student teachers, did not alter their perceptions over the student teaching period as much as the other two groups. The two significant differences for suburban student teachers, in evaluation and towards the school principal, are probably attributable to their greater experience with both after student teaching. These two factors were probably the least operative ones during their previous classroom experience of "observation and methods".

In summary, the results demonstrate that key persons do influence student teachers during the period of their practice teaching. The influences of key persons are shown to be particularly

important for the inner-city student teacher who is coping with an unfamiliar environment at the same time that she is developing a new teaching role.

The results support the need for planned experiences with the inner-city community prior to and concurrent with assuming responsibility for teaching inner-city children. They demonstrate that such experiences can combat the negative effects of the student teaching experience on students who do not have an inner-city frame of reference. A community-based program can exert a demonstrably positive influence upon student teachers' beliefs and behaviors toward children.